



THE CATHEDRAL CENTER

WORKING TO END HOMELESSNESS, ONE LIFE AT A TIME

MISSION

The Cathedral Center (CCI) was founded to address the very specific need for shelter and support services for women and families. CCI achieves its mission to “provide a safe environment for women and families, while working to end homelessness one life at a time” by offering comprehensive, targeted programs that include emergency shelter, case management services, and, most recently, workforce development. We are one of the few agencies in Milwaukee that serves individual women and single fathers with their children. Our shelter model also enables us to keep families intact, regardless of size. Located in the heart of downtown Milwaukee, we reach people who do not know where they will sleep next, who are doubled up, moving from house to house, or who have a pending eviction. Our services are free of charge and we serve clients for up to 90 days.

The Cathedral Center serves nearly 1,000 women and families in crisis each year. We work individually to help them develop a strategic, personal plan toward independence that helps:

- Secure safe housing
- Increase income
- Improve personal skills

NEED IN THE COMMUNITY

Homelessness is often dangerous, uncomfortable, and leads to significant social consequences if left unaddressed. While there are many causes of homelessness in addition to poverty, data suggests that a scarcity of affordable housing, evictions, untreated mental health and substance abuse issues, and increasing rates of domestic violence are the top facilitators of housing crises for thousands of people on any given night in Milwaukee. In addition, today’s portrait of a homeless person has evolved from the single older male to a person who is younger, better educated, and often accompanied by their family. In fact, women and children continue to be the fastest growing segment of the homeless population—a population arguably most vulnerable to victimization.

On any given night in Milwaukee over 1,500 people are homeless...and women and children are now experiencing the fastest growth in homelessness in our nation! Milwaukee is the 4th poorest city across the nation. The reasons are complicated and myriad: 100% live at or below the poverty level; only 40% were assessed as capable of increased employment; as many as 60% suffer from disabling conditions; many are chronically homeless; all are unemployed/underemployed; and many have completed high school and some post-secondary. On a daily basis, people facing homelessness must make “lesser evil choices” in order to survive – sometimes this includes having to choose medication or a warm place to stay over food. Women and families have been a



growing segment of the homeless population since the late 1990s, and many of the women we serve are mothers separated from their children due to poverty and homelessness.

In 2016, 2,816 women and 3,052 families called IMPACT 2-1-1 for emergency shelter, with only 136 beds for women and 91 rooms for families in the Milwaukee area. CCI's shelter provides 32 beds for women and 8 family rooms. In 2016, 40% of homeless individuals were households with children; CCI served 61 families with 125 children in shelter. Those not entering shelter were referred to other services, such as CCI's Community Case Management program. Clearly our community is in need of not only emergency shelter beds, but services that will assist individuals and families to end their homelessness, sustain their independence and, ideally, support them to avoid becoming homeless whenever possible.

ADDRESSING THE NEED

The Cathedral Center is more than just a place to sleep – it is an entry point to the social services system for many women and families. We combine emergency shelter with case management services, assistance with employment and education, housing placement and transitional living services, access to benefits and other social services to help women and families transform their lives and achieve their goals...fulfilling our mission to end homelessness, one life at a time.

Today, CCI is serving women and families who are more vulnerable than ever. Rates of reported mental health diagnoses, chronic substance abuse, and domestic violence have increased by a factor of 100% over the past several years. We provide a critical safety net and a plan of action uniquely suited to women and families who have been failed by numerous systems and have nowhere else to turn.

We not only meet our clients' most basic needs but our comprehensive approach serves to empower women and families by helping them identify their own needs, recognize the choices they have, create options for themselves and be a powerful proponent of permanent change in their own lives—and that of their families. Despite significant challenges in serving a population with higher needs than ever before, and shrinking public funding revenue streams, we continue to satisfy the need by keeping our clients at the core of our mission, and continually enhancing our programs to achieve notable service outcomes.

Emergency Shelter

The Cathedral Center offers shelter for up to 32 individual women and 8 families each night. Overflow shelter serves additional 10 women during winter and summer months. CCI's Shelter program offers a clean, welcoming, safe environment and meets all of our guests' basic needs—including hygiene and 3 meals a day, as hunger and homelessness often go hand in hand.

On a typical day, residents arrive at the Center between 5pm-7pm (families can arrive at 3pm). At 7pm, all guests are served an evening meal prepared and served by hospitality volunteers. After dinner, everyone completes individual chores, has an opportunity to take a shower, and can take advantage of some quiet time before lights out at 9pm. In the morning, all guests receive breakfast and are given a bagged lunch to ensure they have a meal during the day. Guests leave by 10am during the week to go to school, medical appointments, job interviews, and/or participate in any other activity outlined in their Individual Plan for Independence.



Day services include mental and physical health assessments and referrals, and case management support. We also offer educational and group activities that enable our guests to gain life skills and build upon existing skills needed to live independently.

2016 Outcomes:

- *18,984 nights of emergency shelter was provided in 2016.*
- *We provided a safe, welcoming environment to 409 women and 61 families with 125 children who would otherwise have been forced to sleep outside or be subjected to violent and abusive situations.*

Case Management

Case management complements our Emergency Shelter program. CCI case managers possess empathy and respect for those they serve and employ a proven model for positive outcomes: assessment, asset/barrier identification, goal planning (Individual Plans for Independence), outreach, and connection to community resources and housing. They empower families to become independent by helping them identify their own needs, recognize their choices, create options for themselves, and to be a powerful proponent of permanent change in their own lives and their families. CCI's Shelter Case Management targets shelter clients; and Community Case Management targets low-income households who have not yet become homeless, but will without assistance.



CCI's community case management program has been identified as a best practice in Milwaukee County Continuum of Care's (CoC) 2015 and 2016 annual submission to HUD. Our program is described as a proven effective strategy for reducing the demand for emergency shelters and homelessness in Milwaukee, while also being one of the most under-funded of successful programs.

2016 Outcomes:

- *59% of women in shelter and 82% of families left to a safe housing placement and 16% of women and 34% of families increased their income.*
- *33 women and 36 families who resided in the community were assisted in avoiding a shelter stay altogether.*

Women's Independence Program

Homeless women and families have unique needs related to securing income for housing. There is a clear service gap for this population. CCI's new workforce initiative was developed to help increase income for both housing and food security. The program leverages CCI's expertise in working with this population along with community partners within a new model of employment-focused support for the homeless.

The Women's Independence Program (WIP) addresses employment barriers specific to women and families struggling with homelessness through a combination of onsite intensive individual support; life-tools; consistent, positive behavior reinforcement; incentives; and access to community resources that will help a marginalized population transition out of homelessness and on to self-support. It offers a framework that connects supportive services, soft-skills education, workforce skills training, connections with employers, while leveraging case management services and a deep understanding of clients' struggles, recognizing the common lack of healthy support systems.

2016 Outcomes:

- *108 women participated in work readiness training and 160 in soft skills and personal development workshops*
- *The number of women in shelter whose income increased went from 12.5% at the end of 2015 to 14.2% at the end of 2016.*
- *The number of community case management households (both women and families) whose income increased went from 21.6% at the end of 2015 to 35.4% at the end of 2016.*

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES & GROWTH

The Cathedral Center experienced tremendous growth in 2016 with the addition of a new transitional/emergency housing program in collaboration with Friendship House, resulting in increased staffing levels and expanded programming. In late December, CCI received certification as a Service Enterprise by Points of Light, the world's largest organization dedicated to volunteer service, recognizing CCI's commitment to effectively and strategically engaging volunteer time and talent.



The women and families we serve continue to struggle with more disabling conditions than ever before. Preliminary 2016 numbers illustrate their stress levels, with reports of 12.5% more severe mental illness than last year; 56% more substance abuse issues; and 40% more disabilities.

HISTORY

As a result of a community wide collaboration to address the lack of shelter space for women and children, CCI began as Milwaukee's first and only women's overflow shelter in 1996. First operating in common areas of local churches, CCI's emergency shelter program was a partnership of the American Red Cross, Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee, Columbia St. Mary's-St. Ben's Clinic, Milwaukee County Department of Health & Human Services, Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist and Catholic Charities.

In 2002 CCI became its own 501(c)(3) and all operations moved under one roof at our current location in 2003. The average length of stay that first year was 3 days, growing to 4-6 weeks in 2016. We now provide the 2nd highest number (19.25%) of shelter nights of Milwaukee Shelter & Transitional Housing Task Force members. Community needs have changed over the past 10+ years, and our services have grown from a women's overflow shelter to a fully utilized emergency shelter for women and families. We are proud of how far we have come and yet we know that we can do more for those we serve.

NEED FOR SUPPORT

Milwaukee area shelters offer more than just a place to sleep. We know that complementing shelter with case management services, assistance with employment and education is a top priority. It is through these supportive services that we help people transform their lives. But, these same services are completely at risk due to cuts in funding. Fewer resources are available at a time when the need for services continues to grow. Without private funding, the only result can be more homeless men, women, and families struggling to eat, sleep, and stay safe on Milwaukee's streets.



CCI operates a lean, efficient agency, with less than 17% of our annual budget for Administrative and Fundraising expenses; we have ended each of the past 10 fiscal years without operating deficits. We continually work to engage the community to diversify streams of revenue, recruit volunteers, and secure in-kind donations, all of which enable us to make a sustainable impact on critical issues such as homelessness and hunger by raising awareness and inspiring action.

You can help provide critical support to help reach and serve those who are all too often overlooked, tackling the complex issues surrounding poverty and homelessness.

For more information, please visit our website at www.cathedral-center.org.

If you have questions or would like to get involved, please contact: Carol McLain, Director of Resource Development, at 414-831-0394 ext. 2127 or cmclain@cathedral-center.org.